



BRUCE PYKE

COTTON COTTON COTTON RESEARCH ROUNDUP



BRUCE FINNEY

FED AG MINISTER IN COTTON COUNTRY

On a visit to 'Keytah', Moree, last month, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke inspected farmer led irrigation demonstration sites and launched *Irrigation Essentials*, a publication summarising irrigation research as well as challenges and opportunities for the industry.

'Keytah' owners Neil, Ann and David Statham with manager Andrew Parkes hosted the visit by Minister Burke who was interested to understand the impact of drought on the cotton industry and its communities. It was an excellent opportunity for Cotton Australia Chair Joanne Grainger and CEO Adam Kay to discuss relevant industry policy matters and for CRDC Chair Mike Logan and Executive Director Bruce Finney to highlight the impact of R&D on sustaining productivity growth.

Bruce Finney said "The past seven years have seen cotton growers plant less than 50 per cent of the historical cotton area.

"It's been very difficult for everyone and we look forward to better operating conditions. Positively throughout the same period the innovative ability of growers,

supported by world leading R&D, has enabled nearly a 30 per cent increase in yields.

"This remarkable achievement has been possible through the adoption of ever improving Australian bred varieties and advances in management practices. Significant gains in water use efficiency, energy use and more adaptable farming systems are some examples of these advances."

The *Irrigation Essentials* publication launched by the Minister was produced by the National Program for Sustainable Irrigation (NPSI), of which CRDC became managing agent last year.

The publication covers irrigation enterprise establishment and management, irrigation methods, business management, creating a water budget, scheduling and monitoring, agronomy and soil considerations, plus a host of other valuable information for irrigators.

NPSI Program Manager Guy Roth said efficient irrigation was crucial if irrigators are to remain globally competitive.

"Australian irrigation research has led to new technologies and detailed management guidelines that help irrigators adapt these techniques to suit individual farms," he said.

"This publication harvests the key principles of efficient irrigation from the NPSI program and other research, along with examples of leading-edge technology."

A copy of *Irrigation Essentials* can be found on the National Program for Sustainable Irrigation website www.npsi.gov.au or email npsi@crdc.com.au for a hard copy.

NEW DVD - ARRIVE HOME ALIVE FROM THE 2010 PICKING

Knowledge of what to do to avoid fatalities and serious injury on the job is a vital concern for all employers, and employees. Addressing this urgent need, cotton producers and picking contractors are set to benefit from the all-new Safe Harvest DVD produced by CRDC in readiness for the coming 2010 picking season.

Convenor of the DVD production, Helen Dugdale, urges industry to take a deadly serious view on safety because on-farm deaths and injuries are preventable, yet remain a constant threat for every farm.

"Everybody who goes to work has an expectation of arriving home safely, but safety is a team effort and everyone needs to be on the same page in having a team plan for the wellbeing of fellow workers," Helen said.

"We've ensured the 12-minute production is packed with key messages for on-the-job induction of new employees as well as experienced operators.

"We all have a responsibility to produce a cotton industry workplace culture where prevention of injury during the picking season is of primary concern to all employers and employees.

"The short film covers safety topics ideally suited to everyone in the cotton picking workplace and covers worker site inductions, communication, powerlines, maintenance, night-work, fire hazards, transport, machinery and equipment.

Distribution of the DVD will be through machinery dealerships, Cotton Grower Associations, picking contractors, extension personnel and CRDC. CRDC thanks the valuable sponsorship and logistical support for the production provided by the John Deere company.

For further information, contact Helen Dugdale at CRDC 02 6792 4088.

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Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke (second from left) launched the National Program for Sustainable Irrigation publication *Irrigation Essentials* among the cotton fields of 'Keytah' Moree, with (from left) CRDC Executive Director Bruce Finney, Program Manager Guy Roth and 'Keytah' Manager Andrew Parkes.

THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY'S BIG DAY OUT

Following in the footsteps of last year's successful event at 'Keytah' with Sundown Pastoral Company's Andrew Parkes, CRDC and Cotton CRC are again joining forces to present a Big Day Out, with the 2009 winners of the Innovative Cotton Grower of the year, Jamie and Susie Grant at 'Kielli', Jimbour Qld. The day will provide those who attend with an up-close look at how the Grants' dryland farming business has evolved over time to drought-proof itself and increase the reliability of annual operating profit.

The day will explore the pros and cons of having a highly routinized, rigid crop rotation in which the only income-bearing crop is cotton. The Grants' have focused on marrying the principles of no-till farming with those of high yielding cotton production to minimise costs of production associated with crop nutrition and weed control.

"The outcome is a unique system that exemplifies the achievements that are possible through innovation and ingenuity," said CRDC Farming Systems Investment Manager Tracey Leven.

"Whether you are from a dryland or an

irrigated farming background, this year's Big Day Out is sure to challenge your thinking."

Big Day Out – March 10, 2010, hosted by Jamie and Susie Grant, 'Kielli', Jimbour. For more information contact Tracey Leven, CRDC on 02 6792 4088.

THE BELTWISE HIGHLIGHTS SIMILAR ISSUES

Tracey Leven, Manager Farming Systems Investment with CRDC recently attended the US Beltwide Cotton Conference and found many similar issues being dealt with in the cotton industries of the two vastly different nations.

"It's not just Australia that is grappling with limited water and competition for water resources from mining. Like the Australian situation, American growers are finding that precision in irrigation application tends to couple higher yields with water savings – driving significant interest in technologies for accurate irrigation scheduling," Tracey said.

"Australian cotton growers should heed the warnings being provided by their American counterparts in relation to glyphosate resistance.

"The speed with which the problem evolves once the first resistant weeds are detected has led to devastating losses of productivity and higher production costs.

"Seven different species of weeds now have resistance which affects 2.3 million hectares in the cotton belt. Glyphosate underpins the water use efficiency of limited water farming systems in Australia as well as providing a very flexible weed management system for cotton production.

"Farm business owners need to weigh up the value of reaping every cost saving that is afforded by glyphosate in the short term with achieving most of the cost savings and securing its continued efficacy over the longer term. The take home message for us is to use herbicides with different modes of action and that the retention of strategic tillage operations is critical."

While at the conference Tracey met with Kater Hake, the Vice President of Agricultural Research with Cotton Incorporated, to discuss the research priorities where there may be benefit in Australia and America working collaboratively.

Priorities discussed included biosecurity preparedness, particularly for exotic viruses; standardising the type of indices that are used for the assembly of lifecycle analyses for cotton products; and building on the collaboration that is already in place for development of the irrigation scheduling tool, Smartcrop.

RURAL COMMUNITIES SUSTAINED

Widespread interest has been shown from all over Australia to take part in a conference convened by the cotton industry in April 2010. The conference will focus on how rural communities can remain vibrant and viable amid changing economic, environmental and social issues.

The conference will be held from April 19–21 at the Crossing Theatre, Narrabri.

The three-day conference is a joint project of CRDC and the Cotton CRC and is titled Sustaining Rural Communities – Social research for rural communities and all its industries.

Open for all people in the cotton industry, the event will be developed to allow direct input from researchers, regional communities and farmers.

Conveners, CRDC's Rohan Boehm and Paula Jones of the Cotton CRC say the industry has a substantial body of new research and insights that can allow regional Australia to plan and act for the future.

"In the past few years, both CRDC and Cotton CRC have developed extensive research and important relationships across most rural industries, and 2010 has proven to be the ideal time to bring people together to grow their ideas and responses to the future of sustainable rural commu-

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nities," Rohan Boehm, CRDC Program Manager Communication and Capacity Investment, said.

"A three day conference format has emerged as the most effective platform that will allow for the broadest range of knowledge, experience and research to be applied to the key question.

"This won't be set up as a talk-fest, we're targeting people with real experience and expertise to meet and mingle – then come up with real plans for their own rural communities and industries.

"Each day of the three day program will feature a theme and will have about a third on the research, a third on workshops and a third devoted to networks and planning," he said.

Day 1 – The Research – social research concerning rural communities and economies, impacts of climate change, drought, water reforms, resources boom and global food/fibre security.

Day 2 – The Workforces – responses to creating and sustaining regionally flexible workforces with resilient communities.

Day 3 – The Capacity – the culture of learning, leadership and building the capacity of rural people and their communities.

Attendance for the conference program



Paula Jones and Rohan Boehm.

is free; but registration in advance will be necessary. Information on how to do this will be on the Cotton CRC website.

"We look forward to being able to bring together a number of interested people at this first conference of its type," says co-organiser Dr Paula Jones, Cotton CRC Research Program Director.

"Already we have registered interest from as far as Western and South Australia, which signifies the need for this type of conference, and will ensure a great demographic of delegates which will no doubt benefit all attendees.

"Most rural communities are facing similar challenges, so there is a great opportunity on offer for people to come and hear how to try to overcome these issues as well as network among each other to learn how others have sustained their communities," she said.

The program will be available in early February and delegates who are interested in attending the conference can now pre-register at www.cottoncrc.org.au

For more information contact Kate Schwager on 02 6799 2477 or E: kate.schwager@csiro.au

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